

REMARKS

Applicants thank Examiners Neal and Thanh for participating in a personal interview with applicants' representatives on August 15, 2007. The substance of the interview is incorporated into the following remarks.

Independent claims 1, 9, 22 and 29, and their dependent claims, have been rejected as anticipated by Crittenden (U.S. Patent No. 5,290,247). While not conceding the merits of the rejection, applicants have amended the claims to expedite prosecution.

In particular, applicants have amended claims 1, 9 and 29 to recite that the device body has a ledge formed on an internal surface of the body at an intersection between a bore and a tapered hole. Crittenden's funnel 154/104 (which the Examiner equates to the recited body) does not have such a ledge.

Applicants have amended claim 22 to recite a device including receiving means for receiving a tube and separating means for completely separating a member from the device while the member remains in the tube. Crittenden does not describe or suggest at least the recited separating means because Crittenden's slit 130 (which the Examiner equates to the recited separating means) of funnel 154/104 (which the Examiner equates to the recited guide means) of Crittenden's device does not extend into the portion of funnel 154/104 that receives sheath 152/102 (which the Examiner equates to the recited tube), and, therefore, a member would not be able to completely separate from Crittenden's device through slit 130 while still remaining in sheath 152/102.

For at least this reason, applicants request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of claims 1, 9, 22 and 29, and their dependent claims.

Independent claim 20 and its dependent claims have been rejected as being unpatentable over Crittenden in view of Weber (U.S. Patent No. 4,385,575). Claim 20 recites, among other features, separating the body and the member by passing the member through the slot. Crittenden and Weber, alone or in combination, do not describe or suggest this feature.

As shown in Figs. 8A and 8B, Crittenden describes advancing a catheter (which the Examiner apparently equates to the recited member) into the sheath 102 through the funnel 104. As acknowledged by the Examiner, Crittenden does not describe or suggest separating the catheter from the funnel 104 by passing the catheter through the slit 130. Rather, as shown in

Figs. 9A and 9B, the slit 130 is used to allow portions of the funnel 104 to overlap and thereby decrease the diameter of the funnel 104 when the funnel 104 is inserted into a guide catheter 51 having a small diameter. The Examiner turns to Weber as disclosing this feature, stating:

Crittenden does not specifically disclose the steps of separating the body and the member by passing the member through the slot;... However, Weber teaches separating the member from a body through a slot (figs. 2-4). Therefore, it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify the steps of separating the body from the member according to the teaching of Weber. Such a method of separating a member through a slot is old and well known in the art, but nonetheless, it provides the advantage of another possible method for separating two components easily.

Page 5 of Office Action. Applicants assert that the Examiner has failed to provide a *prima facie* case of obviousness because: (1) contrary to the Examiner's assertion, Figs. 2-4 of Weber do not show separating a member from a body through a slot; and (2) the Examiner has provided no reason why a person of ordinary skill in the art would wish to separate the catheter (which the Examiner apparently equates to the recited member) of Crittenden from funnel 104/154 through slit 130.

For at least these reasons, applicants request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claim 20 and its dependent claims.

With respect to dependent claim 28, Crittenden does not describe or suggest decoupling the funnel 154 from the intracoronary sheath 152. Rather, Crittenden describes heatbonding the funnel 154 to the intracoronary sheath 152. See, e.g., col. 6, lines 5-7. Accordingly, claim 28 is also patentable over Weber and Crittenden for at least this additional reason.

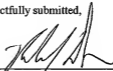
Applicants submit that all claims are in condition for allowance.

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Serial No. : 10/765,214
Filed : January 28, 2004
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Attorney's Docket No.: 00167-524001 / 02-31-0483

The fees in the amount of \$460 for the Petition for Extension of Time are being paid concurrently herewith on the Electronic Filing System (EFS) by way of Deposit Account authorization. Please apply any charges or credits to deposit account 06-1050.

Respectfully submitted,



Date: October 16, 2007

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